

# THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

*pro bono humani generis*

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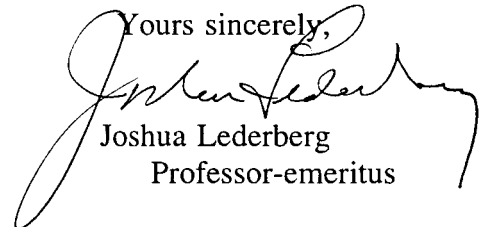
Joshua Lederberg  
UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR

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Dear Dr. Bazopoulou-Kyrkanidou

I am writing to ask your help in tracing the etymology of "Genome". What might the "-ome" ending signify in Greek? Forget about "-some" (soma) which I believe is a diversion. Of course now words like phenome, proteome, physiome are being coined in imitation of "genome", without much regard to Greek origins.

Can you assist?

Yours sincerely,  
  
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Professor-emeritus

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gained. -----  
chromosomes.

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but also -- for -ome.

OED:

-ome, anglicized form of -oma (partly through influence of G. -om, F. -ome), occurring chiefly in Bot. in terms such as caulome, hadrome, phyllome, rhizome, and usu. signifying a structure or group of cells forming a normal part of the anatomy, in contrast with the abnormality implied by -oma (cf. mycetome, an organ in insects, mycetoma, a fungal skin disease). It also occurs in a few obs. forms of words now written -oma, e.g. fibrome, tuberculome.

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As these botanical terms were well established in the last century, cf also "biome", I suspect this connotation of 'ome was also current for Winkler (a botanist!) and his contemporaries, even accepting the chance that a "rhyme" with "chromosome" may have been a factor?

How do we investigate this? I am asking some Greek friends to dig